

Mishnayot**מסכת שבת**

Nearing the end of the Perek, we reach Mishna Yud, Perek Aleph Mesechet Shabbat. The Mishna deals with cooking food on Friday. One may not roast meat, onions or eggs on a Friday unless there is time for them to cook before Shabbat comes in. In the previous Mishnayot, the concern has been whether one may set in motion events which will continue to complete on Shabbat. Here, however the concern is that one will inadvertently stir the pot to speed up the cooking process once it is already Shabbat. Therefore, even Bet Hillel are concerned and forbid food to be started cooking close to the Shabbat.

An interesting point is that this means that when one is having chulent or a similar dish on Shabbat for lunch, one has to ensure that it is at least semi-edible

by the time Shabbat comes in. This is to ensure that you don't stir it to speed up the cooking. One cannot put bread or biscuits to bake close to Shabbat unless there is time for the outside facing the fire to harden before Shabbat. This point in the cooking seems to be the time after which one is not going to stir the coals.

Rabbi Eliezer says, that in fact you must wait for even the side against the wall to crust. In the old days one would bake some breads by plastering them against the wall of the oven. Therefore, Rabbi Eliezer says that it is not enough to allow the outside form a crust. Rather you must wait until even the inner edge against the wall has got a crust.

'Parasha Digest – Mikeitz'

In Rishon this week, we start off in the house of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. He has a famous dream with 7 healthy cows eating 7 weak cows. His second dream is similar but this time, 7 strong sheaves of wheat consume 7 weak sheaves. Pharaoh is disturbed by the parallel dreams and tries, with no success, to find a satisfactory interpretation. The butler recommends Yosef who is brought forth, washed, shaved and given a changing of clothes.

The next scene is set in Pharaoh's chamber where, in Sheini, Yosef is brought. He explains that both dreams have the same meaning. There will be 7 years of richness and good harvests followed by such awful times that the good times will be 'eaten-up'. He then suggests to Pharaoh that one man should organise a food-storage system, like a bank regulator. Pharaoh decides that Yosef is the best man for the job.

Pharaoh expresses his gratitude to Yosef in Shlishi and along with giving Yosef his ring and kingly clothes, Pharaoh appoints him as the man in charge of all the food. Yosef is renamed as Tsofnat Paaneach and marries Osnat, daughter of Poti Fera whom we have already encountered named as Potifar. In the 7 good years, the thirty year-old Yosef organises the food taking a heavy tax and storing plenty of grain. Yosef and Osnat daughter of Poti Fera have two children together, Menashe and Ephraim.

Suddenly, in Revii, the famine hits hard. Yosef take complete control giving food to the whole country

and even the whole region.

In a change of scene, we are told that Yaakov was running out of food. He sent ten of his sons to get grain from Mitsrayim. When Yosef recognised his brothers, he accused them of being spies, ordering them to return with their littlest brother, Binyamin.

In Chamishi, Shimon stays as captive whilst the others go to get Binyamin. However, on their way they find that some of the money used to buy provisions for the return had been put into one of the sacks. They told Yaakov everything but only when the intensity of the famine increased did he allow Yehuda to take charge of Binyamin and go to get more food.

In Shishi, Yosef gives the brothers a feast as they have brought Binyamin. Worriedly, they told the steward that they had found money in their bags but had intended to originally pay. He reassured them that he had got their money. Yosef checks that his father is well and talks with Binyamin. According to the Medrash, Binyamin told him that he has ten sons, all named in memory of Yosef.

Shevii begins with Yosef crying, overcome with emotion. The meal over, and Binyamin having been give five times as much food as anyone else, Yosef has his silver goblet put in Binyamin's bag. After they leave, Yosef catches them up and accuses them of the theft. When found, he commandeers Binyamin allowing the others to go.



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The Best Insurance

Towards the end of the 4th aliyah, Yosef, unrecognized by his brothers, recognizes them when they come to buy food. He accuses them of treachery and imprisons them for three days. In the 5th aliyah, Yosef demands that Binyamin be brought to Egypt and keeps Shimon as a hostage. The brothers relate their adventure to Yaakov who refuses to send Binyamin. The increasing famine forces Yaakov to concede to Yehuda's guarantee that Binyamin will be safe, and the brothers return to Egypt. However two of the twelve tribes gamble on 2 of the most precious things in order that they will bring back Binyamin alive and well to Yaakov. In Perek 42, Pasuk 37 Reuven says "You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring him to you." Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Zalaznik asks: Whatever possessed Reuven to put his sons' lives on the line? How could he be so sure that he would not fail to return with Binyamin?

Also, in Perek 43, Pasuk 9, Yehuda says "I will guarantee him, you may demand him from my hand. If I do not bring him to you and present him to you, then I will have sinned against you for always," Rashi explains that Yehuda was undertaking here to forfeit his share in the next world should he fail to bring back Binyamin. Why was this necessary? Surely Yaakov knew that Yehuda will try his best to bring back Binyamin safely, guarantee or not. So why do both Yehuda and Reuven forfeit such precious things to their father?

With the case of Reuven, the Gemara (Bava Kama 50a) tells the story of Nechunia Chofer Sichin, a righteous individual who was in the habit of excavating water holes for the public

use. Once, his daughter fell into such a pit and Nechunia assured everyone that she would remain unscathed. How could he be so sure? The answer is that it would be inconceivable that the very thing that he provided for the public good should cause grief to him. The same is true with Reuven. He knew that the sons of one such as he, exerted himself in saving Yosef from certain death, could not possibly fall victim to a similar fate, therefore he made their lives dependent of his returning of Binyamin, for by doing so, he was ensuring G-D would grant him success.

In the case of Yehuda the Shem Meshumuel explains that if a person is working towards an important goal, he won't quite give it his all, as he is liable to lose heart along the way, unless success is critical. In that case, however difficult it is to succeed, he will pursue it tenaciously and reach deep into himself to discover hidden strengths and talent that will carry him success. This is what Yehuda was doing by agreeing to forfeit his share in the next world; he was exposing himself to peril of the highest order. He also did this so Yaakov could be calmer, as he knew for certain that Yehuda will try his utmost to bring Binyamin back as he would extend himself to the very limits of his ability and beyond, to return Binyamin – even in situations that he might have otherwise deemed hopeless had not so much been at stake. (Dvar torah brought from Talelei Oros by Rabbis Yissachar Dov Rubin)

Wishing everyone a Shabbat Shalom and a Lichthige Chanukah,

By Alex Klinger

At the conclusion of every 16-hour work day in the hell called Bergen-Belsen, the block commander liked to have some fun with the Jews in his charge.

The meal at the end of the day consisted of old dry bread, filthy watery soup and a pat of something like margarine made from vegetable fat.

The margarine was scooped out of a large tub, and after the meal had been distributed and the tub was empty, the commander allowed the starving prisoners to jump into the empty tub and lick the remaining margarine from the walls of the tub. The sight of starving Jews licking up bits of margarine provided nightly entertainment for the commander and his guards.

One prisoner, however, refused to be a part of the commander's show. Though like all the rest he was a withered, starving shadow of a man aged far beyond his years, still, he would never allow himself to scavenge for a lick of margarine. The other prisoners called him Eliyahu. In some unspoken way, the others drew strength from Eliyahu's refusal to join the frenzy. The fight and determination he showed convinced them that all was not yet lost.

Then, one night, something happened that seemed to shatter whatever spirit remained in the prisoners. Eliyahu cracked. All at once he threw himself into the greasy vat and furiously rolled around like a crazed beast .

How the commander howled. It was a deep laugh of satanic satisfaction. The last of the Jews had been broken.

Later, after the guards left and the Jews were in their barracks, Eliyahu took off his shirt and began to tear it to shreds. The others looked on in silence. Had Eliyahu gone mad?

He would study the shirt for a moment, carefully looking it over, as if searching for some exact location, and then tear that area into a strip. He looked up. His eyes were on fire. "Do you know what tonight is?" he demanded. "Tonight is the first night of Chanukah."

Eliyahu studied the shirt again, finding another choice spot to tear. A spot he had purposely saturated with grease from his roll in the margarine tub.

That night, Eliyahu led the other prisoners in the lighting of the Chanukah flames. The wicks were from the strips of his shirt, and the bits of margarine Eliyahu had furiously scavenged was the oil. Eliyahu's flames illuminated the barracks, filling the prisoners with hope, faith and purpose.

Eliyahu's light continues to shine, as do the lights of all the Holocaust victims and survivors who underwent such indescribable pain and torture, psychological, emotional and physical, in order to retain their Jewish practices as best as they could in the unimaginably terrible circumstances. These holy people, who showed such resistance and iron will, truly were, and are, lights within the darkness.

(a true story adapted from www.aish.com)

Thought for the Week—Things we can learn from the Holocaust:

Appreciate our lives - we are able to lead Jewish lives relatively safely and peacefully: this should not be taken for granted. Jews during the Holocaust were prepared to risk their lives for the opportunities we assume to be normality. We should thank Hashem for everything – big or small.
 A Jew's sense of security must come from his faith in G-d, not a government.

[מא - לג] "מֵיֵרָה פֶּרַעַה אִישׁ נְבוֹן וְחָכָם"
 "...pharaoh seek out a discerning and wise man..."

There is a Gemara in Mesechet Shabbat that says that "one who is accustomed with a candle will have children who are Bnei Torah or Torah Scholars." Rashi comments on this Gemara and says that the candle refers to the candles of Shabbat and the candles of Chanukah.

A simple explanation of this would be that those who perform the mitzvah of Shabbat and Chanukah candles will have the reward stated in the Gemara.

The Maharal differs to the aforementioned Pshat and explains that the candle is, in the language of symbolism, representative of the whole world. In order to explain the statement he paraphrases it as: "one who is accustomed to looking at the whole world as a candle will have children who are Bnei Torah." But what does it mean to look at the whole world as a candle?

There is a Pasuk in Mishlei that says:

"כִּי נֵר מְצוּהָ וְתוֹרָה אֹר" *The candle is a mitzvah and Torah is light.*

The individual commandment is compared to a lamp which requires oil and a wick in order to burn, similarly a mitzvah only has force as long as a man's spirit is contained in his body. The Torah on the other hand is light itself, general and intangible, radiating in a man's spirit long after his death.

As the mitzvah candle of Shabbat or Chanukah burns down and the flames are dancing their last we might be tempted to ask ourselves, "what have we really gained or what is accomplished through this act of lighting? The good oil is gone and the money spent but what actually remains?"

The Maharal states that although the oil has been consumed the light generated from the candle continues to run its eternal course. It goes on forever. So

what have we accomplished by performing this mitzvah? We have in reality taken a piece of this temporal world and unlocked its eternal essence. We have taken a physical action and elevated it into a spiritual realm.

This answers our original question of how does one look at the whole world as a candle – he simply sees the world as being packed with endless spiritual potential. Any item, each person and every single moment is dense with limitless possibility. One who is able to 'see' the spiritual light of Torah is one who can see the opportunity for Mitzvot in our banal physical actions.

R'Elyah Lopian compares this world to the years of plenty, and the Next World to the years of famine. (Pharaoh's dream) Only in this world do we have almost endless opportunities to study Torah and perform its commandments. In the Next World, no such opportunity exists; it is a time of famine. We tend to think that this life is forever and we will always be able to do Mitzvot and store away spiritual provisions for later. It takes wisdom to envision a time when we will not be able to add to our storehouse of merit. If we remember the famine of Mitzvot that exists in the Next World, we will use our time wisely.

This is the lesson that can be learnt from Yosef's words when he says to Pharaoh "seek out a wise and discerning man and set him over the land of Egypt." Only a wise man could comprehend the dangers of the famine that lay ahead whilst still living in a time of abundant plenty. It is interesting to note that the words used to describe this character are נְבוֹן וְחָכָם (see Pasuk above) – Mishlei tells us (see issue 314) that a person who has these qualities is someone who is able to see the light of creation, the light of torah; someone who looks at the whole world as a candle.

Shabbat Shalom

Riddle for the Week

Name an event in the Tanach in which exactly 300 animals participated?

(Answer in next week's Living Torah)

Answer To Last Week's Riddle:

What letter from the Aleph Beis is missing from ברכת המזון and why?

Peh Sophit - the final Peh. The reason given is that whoever says the ברכת המזון properly will be saved from "אף anger, שׂף fury and קָפָה wrath". All of these words are expressions of Hashem's anger and they all end with the letter Peh Sophit.